UNITED NATIONS

Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/COP(1)/7
25 July 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**
First Session
Rome, 29 September - 10 October 1997
Agenda item 4

# URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA AND INTERIM MEASURES IN OTHER REGIONS: COMPILATION OF INFORMATION

Note by the Secretariat

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GE.97-63711

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the same time as adopting the text of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) at its fifth session in Paris (6 to 17 June 1994), the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for Desertification (INCD) adopted resolution 5/1 on urgent action for Africa and resolution 5/2 on interim arrangements.

2. In the resolution on urgent action for Africa, the INCD:

(a) invited affected African countries to take urgent steps to prepare national and subregional action programmes or to review and improve them, as appropriate;

(b) asked developed countries to provide support to the affected African countries;

(c) requested international and multilateral organizations to provide support and mobilize necessary resources;

(d) recommended that affected African countries designate coordinating bodies at the regional and subregional levels;

(e) also recommended the establishment, at the national and subregional levels, of partnership arrangements with relevant developed countries; and

(f) requested the Interim Secretariat (the Secretariat) to facilitate the implementation of the resolution.

3. In the resolution on interim measures, the INCD invited States and regional economic integration organizations entitled to sign the Convention to communicate to the Secretariat information regarding measures taken consistent with the provisions of the CCD pending its entry into force.

4. Following the fifth session, part of the agenda of each subsequent INCD session was devoted to a review of actions taken to implement these two resolutions. Summaries of these discussions by the Chairman of the INCD are to be found in the relevant reports on the sessions, namely A/50/47, A/50/74/Add. 1, A/51/76, A/51/76/Add.1 and A/52/82. Additional documents on the actions are contained in the compilations in:

(a) documents A/AC.241/30 and Add.1 and A/AC.241/40, and

(b) documentation on extrabudgetary funds including A/AC.241/31, A/AC.241/41 and Add.1, A/AC.241/52 and Add.1, A/AC.241/59, A/AC.241/69 and ICCD/COP(1)/4 and Add.1.

5. This present note provides a general report briefly highlighting actions which the Secretariat was requested to support for the implementation of the two resolutions, encompassing the period from the time of their adoption to the date of this note. Such support, either direct financial support or technical support through the participation of staff of the Secretariat, was undertaken generally through contributions to the Trust Fund established under General Assembly Resolution 47/188. In many cases, the actions involved national, subregional or regional meetings, a list of which is contained in the Annex.

6. In general, countries of all four of the CCD's regional implementation annexes made considerable progress on the elaboration of national, subregional and regional action programmes and the Secretariat facilitated initiatives at all of those levels. As might be expected, however, the results varied somewhat from country to country, subregion to subregion and region to region.

7. Initial governmental actions on a national level in any region generally involved the designation of national focal points, establishment of national coordinating committees and the holding of national awareness seminars (also known as national awareness days).

8. These seminars spread awareness of the CCD among decision makers in concerned ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and representatives of local authorities and communities. They also gave significant support to the lead ministries, or the national focal points in charge of CCD implementation, as they strengthened national consensus on the CCD's approaches and implementation modalities. While the response by participants was invariably positive, further efforts were inevitably necessary to:

(a) secure synergy with various strategic planning frameworks for sustainable development;

(b) fully involve national budget and finance authorities;

(c) emphasize the required participatory approach at the local level; and

(d) involve international partners in an ongoing dialogue for the elaboration of the national action programme.

9. There was also a common pattern that emerged in NGO activities at all levels in different regions, often consisting of many of the following features:

(a) NGO efforts were usually based on the action plan developed by the global NGO network, known by its French acronym as RIOD, at a workshop in Ouagadougou in November 1994.

(b) NGOs initiated forums to raise awareness of the Convention and the RIOD action plan, as well as to discuss modalities for coordinating national activities, while emphasizing the need for stronger local and community level participation.

(c) They also established national NGO focal points and encouraged dialogue among NGOs, and between NGOs and governments, sometimes based on formal communication structures.

(d) They organized events at the national and local level to celebrate June 17 as World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

(e) They emphasized the role of women in the implementation of the Convention, as well as the importance of financing local community action through national desertification funds and similar devices.

(f) They exchanged information at the subregional and regional levels through designated focal points, as well as holding subregional and regional forums resulting in recommendations to governments.

(g) They participated in, and met among themselves at, the various subregional and regional meetings discussed below. They also held a meeting in Hyderabad in December 1996 to encourage NGO partnerships across regions in the developing world.

## II. URGENT ACTION IN AFRICA

10. At the *national* level, over 30 countries in the African region have organized national awareness days with the assistance of the Secretariat. In addition to the comments generally applicable to the holding of awareness days, it is noteworthy that most concerned countries are pursuing efforts to sensitize a wide audience to the issue of combating desertification, not only at the national level but at provincial and local levels as well. Two countries have already reached the stage of a first "national forum." In some other countries, the participative and consultative processes initiated could lead soon to this important session, which can only stem from a long preparatory approach aimed at involving all major actors, particularly at the community level.

11. Those countries that already held national forums gained a consensus on the main lines of a national action programme and on the remaining steps to elaborate it. It is proving difficult, however, for them to involve international partners in the process, looking toward the partnership arrangements emphasized in the Convention. Since such arrangements are essential to implementing national action programmes, their initiation should now be a major focus.

12. On the *subregional level*, as indicated in the Annex, all four subregions of Africa have met frequently to discuss elaborating subregional action programmes and to undertake measures to support national action programmes. Among other significant events were subregional meetings of national focal points held at Nouakchott and Asmara, both of which allowed a useful exchange of experiences.

13. The following is a brief summary of the results achieved by member governments in each subregion:

(a) The joint processes of the Permanent Inter-State Council for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was launched in Dakar in July 1995 and strengthened in a meeting at Lome in February 1996. The Lome session set three objectives to be met during deliberations in Niamey in July 1997: determining and agreeing on the priorities of a subregional action programme for West Africa, defining the methodology and timing for elaborating the activities of the programme and settling its coordination, funding and assessment mechanisms. The Niamey meeting should thus give decisive impetus to the West African subregional action programme.

(b) The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) process led to a series of recommendations aimed at facilitating the elaboration of a subregional action programme for East Africa, as well as its harmonization with ongoing IGAD projects and with national action programmes being prepared in the subregion. IGAD member States agreed that their subregional programme should focus on priority areas, such as capacity building, to ensure the success of the implementation process. They also stressed the importance of issues related to livestock, pastoralism and the nomadic sector, which figure greatly in the economic and social development of the subregion.

(c) The Southern African Development Community (SADC) process recommended a draft subregional action programme for approval by its Council of Ministers. This programme addresses, in accordance with the CCD, social and economic issues related to desertification. It also designates organizations responsible for capacity building and training, and sets priorities for necessary actions to be undertaken.

(d) The Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) process began with a meeting in Rabat in October 1994 but slackened after a second meeting in Tunis at the end of 1995. UMA experts came together in April 1997 at the organization's Rabat headquarters to invigorate the process. They discussed a proposal aimed at building UMA's capacity to coordinate the subregional process in North Africa, particularly through establishment of a dedicated coordination unit. They also recommended a work programme for this unit. A regional forum later in 1997 is expected to approve the expert recommendations.

14. At the *regional* level, the Pan-African conference held in Ouagadougou from 18 to 21 March 1997 constituted an important step in the implementation of the CCD in Africa. In a ministerial declaration from that Conference, African environment ministers reaffirmed their determination to honour engagements undertaken at the Rio Summit, in particular with respect to the CCD. The Conference also approved the establishment of a regional co-ordination unit responsible for facilitating the elaboration of a regional action programme, and invited African countries to put in place a regional facilitation fund.

## III. INTERIM MEASURES IN ASIA

15. At the *national* level, awareness seminars were held in 13 Asian countries. In addition, the Secretariat supported the provision of institutional support in Mongolia.

16. Subregional and interregional gatherings also showed substantial progress:

(a) *Subregional* initiatives in Western Asia fostered cooperation through meetings in Bahrain and Abu Dhabi. These gatherings contributed to building political support for the CCD and to reviewing related national priorities in the Arab world. A latest meeting in Damascus explored options for cooperation among such institutions as The Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and Centre for Environment and Development for Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE).

(b) An *interregional* conference in Tashkent, covering the Eurasian land mass, provided fresh impetus for international cooperation to combat land degradation and identified a number of areas that could be incorporated in a forthcoming interregional action programme. Interest was also expressed in transboundary cooperation in the management of natural resources.

(c) A conference in Almaty identified fourteen specific areas for cooperation among countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, notably including water resource utilization in international river basins, networking of protected areas and coordination of research and monitoring.

17. Asian countries were also active at the *regional* level, where a series of meetings greatly strengthened cooperation among Asian countries. The following were the highlights:

(a) Initial meetings identified as priorities information collection, analysis and exchanges, research and development, transfer of technology, capacity-building, education and public awareness.

(b) Important NGO meetings in Islamabad and Hyderabad spelled out the role that NGOs should play in the CCD implementation process in Asia.

(c) The Regional Conference on the Implementation of the CCD in New Delhi, started to define more precisely the scope and content of a regional action programme (RAP) to combat desertification in Asia and listed cross-cutting issues that would be reviewed under various themes. It decided that the RAP would be gradually developed through networking arrangements facilitated by competent institutions in the region.

(d) A Regional Ministerial Conference in Beijing provided important guidelines to strengthen regional cooperation across Asia in the years to come. It endorsed the preparation of a regional action programme and identified initial areas for thematic cooperation, including hosting by China and India respectively of the networks for desertification monitoring and assessment and for agroforestry and soil conservation. It also mandated the continuation of regional cooperation initiatives and invited international organizations to provide financial and technical support to the preparation of the regional action programme.

## IV. INTERIM MEASURES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

18. At the *national* level, a number of countries initiated preparation of national action programmes, and designated national focal points. In some cases, there have also been more specific joint activities, such as the preparation by Argentina and Chile of a project on desertification in Patagonia. Ten countries have held national awareness days.

19. In addition, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are developing activities in both the regional and subregional context, taking into account different levels of perception and knowledge of the challenge of desertification. The impact of land degradation is now better understood in the region but it requires further analysis and dissemination of information regarding losses in productivity and economic and social impacts, including effects of migration patterns and the implications for local climate patterns.

20. At the *subregional* level, a meeting held in early 1996 in the Dominican Republic concentrated on the fragility of island ecosystems in the Caribbean region and underlined the need for subregional coordination. In addition, five countries of the subregion agreed to establish a subregional action plan for the sustainable development of the Puna Americana region of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru.

21. At the *regional* level, three meetings saw significant progress in the identification of common problems and of ways to solve them:

(a) The first regional meeting in Buenos Aires highlighted the necessity to strengthen regional coordination.

(b) The second in Mexico City identified specific areas of cooperation for Latin American and Caribbean countries.

(c) The third conference in Havana decided on the establishment of a regional coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the CCD. As a follow-up to this activity, a letter of understanding was signed in June 1997 by the Government of Mexico, the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/ROLAC) and the Secretariat to support the launching of the regional coordinating unit. At Havana, countries of the region also decided to approve a regional action programme, which included *inter alia* support for a common approach to the Gran Chaco Americano region of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, for combating desertification in the Hispaniola ecosystem and for the further development of an information network and of indicators to monitor land degradation in the region.

## V. INTERIM MEASURES IN THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

22. At the *national* level, in many countries, core ministries responsible for CCD implementation are dealing with the institutional aspects of inter-ministerial coordination while launching information campaigns to ensure broad cross-sectoral coverage of CCD activities. National action programmes are also being prepared.

23. In a *regional* context, there has also been a variety of activities, including seven regional meetings, involving, at various times, government officials, non-governmental organizations and the scientific community. Initially, a study group was set up to promote regional forums, stimulate a bottom-up approach consistent with the CCD, disseminate scientific data and analyses, inventory relevant national programmes and establish information links. This process of coordination and reflection culminated in agreement at Murcia in May 1997 to:

(a) jointly promote the implementation of relevant national action programmes;

(b) encourage the expansion of joint action within the region, such as the Spain and Portugal "Montado" (cork oak) project and the development of common benchmarks and indicators;

(c) share knowledge and experience with other regions, particularly the Southern Mediterranean and Latin America and the Caribbean;

(d) improve communication networks among government and European Union administrations, NGOs, and the scientific and academic communities; and

(e) work together to ensure that European Union programmes take a greater interest in desertification issues.

24. The Secretariat also worked with Northern Mediterranean countries to organize special thematic meetings on subjects such as the relationship between desertification and migration and methodologies for local area development. Finally, meetings of NGOs in Europe highlighted the need to share their experience with Southern NGOs and to involve the European Union more closely in the implementation of the Convention.

ANNEX

MAJOR NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL MEETINGS WITH SECRETARIAT INVOLVEMENT FROM JUNE 1994 - JULY 1997

Africa

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***1994*** | | |
| 5-6 October | Rabat | International meeting on desertification in the Maghreb region |
| 11-14 November | Ouagadougou | International NGO Meeting (RIOD) |
| ***1995*** | | |
| 3-4 April | Praia | National Awareness Seminar in Cape Verde |
| 20-22 April | Asmara | National Awareness Seminar in Eritrea |
| 2-3 May | N'Djamena | National Awareness Seminar in Chad |
| 11-13 May | Ouagadougou | National Awareness Seminar in Burkina Faso |
| 20-22 May | Nouakchott | National Awareness Seminar in Mauritania |
| 22-23 May | Cairo | National Awareness Seminar in Egypt |
| 1-2 June | Addis Ababa | National Awareness Seminar in Ethiopia |
| 6-7 June | Dakar | National Awareness Seminar in Senegal |
| 13-14 June | Cotonou | National Awareness Seminar in Benin |
| 14-15 June | Rabat | National Awareness Seminar in Morocco |
| 17-19 June | Niamey | National Awareness Seminar in Niger |
| 22-23 June | Lusaka | National Awareness Seminar in Zambia |
| 4-6 July | Khartoum | National Awareness Seminar in Sudan |
| 12-14 July | Kampala | National Awareness Seminar in Uganda |
| 24-28 July | Dakar | Subregional consultation for the implementation of the CCD in Western Africa |
| 1-3 August | Asmara | Subregional consultation for the implementation of the CCD in Eastern Africa |
| 28-29 September | Abidjan | National Awareness Seminar in Cote d'Ivoire |
| 18-19 October | Conakry | National Awareness Seminar in Guinea |
| 8-11 November | Tunis | Subregional consultation for the implementation of the CCD in Northern Africa |
| 13-15 November | Lome | National Awareness Seminar in Togo |
| 13-15 November | Praia | Forum for formulation of National Action Programme |
| 14-15 November | Dar-Es-Salaam | National Awareness Seminar in Tanzania |
| 23-24 November | Harare | National Awareness Seminar in Zimbabwe |
| 27-28 November | Pretoria | National Awareness Seminar in South Africa |
| 1-2 December | Tunis | National Awareness Seminar in Tunisia |
| ***1996*** | | |
| 16-18 January | Windhoek | Subregional consultation for the implementation of the CCD in Southern Africa |
| 25-26 January | Luanda | National Awareness Seminar in Angola |
| 30-31 January | Antananarivo | National Awareness Seminar in Madagascar |
| 23-24 February | Lome | Launching of the joint elaboration of Subregional Action Programme of CILSS and ECOWAS member States |
| 25 February | Yaounde | Mini Forum for NGOs |
| 28 Feb.-1 March | Bamako | Forum for formulation of National Action Programme |

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|---|---|---|
| 28-30 March | Kairouan | International NGO Workshop - Partners Against Desertification |
| 6-10 May | Banjul | National Awareness Seminar in Gambia |
| 14-15 May | Maputo | National Awareness Seminar in Mozambique |
| 19-21 May | Djibouti | National Awareness Seminar in Djibouti |
| 21-22 May | Mbabane | National Awareness Seminar in Swaziland |
| 28-31 May | Maroua | Central African NGO Meeting in Cameroon |
| 29-31 May | Dakar | West African NGO Meeting |
| 5-7 June | Rome | International forum on local area development in support of the CCD |
| 10-15 June | Addis Ababa | Technical meeting on the priority areas of IGAD member States |
| 17-20 June | Addis Ababa | East African NGO Meeting |
| 24-28 June | Lisbon | Expert meeting on rehabilitation of degraded forest ecosystems affected by desertification |
| 24-25 June | Accra | National Awareness Seminar in Ghana |
| 31 July-2 August | Harare | Southern African NGO Meeting |
| 24-26 July | Bangui | National Awareness Seminar in Central African Republic |
| 5-11 August | Beijing | First Asia-Africa Forum on the implementation of the CCD |
| 12-14 August | Banjul | Meeting on NAP methodology and on indicators of follow-up |
| 20-22 August | Cotonou | Forum for formulation of National Action Programme |
| 18-22 November | Nouakchott | First technical Workshop for African focal points for the CCD |
| 16-17 December | Algiers | National Awareness Seminar in Algeria |
| *1997* | | |
| 19-21 February | Nairobi | Forum on the Subregional Action Programme for the IGAD member States |
| 3-5 March | Maseru | Forum on the Subregional Action Programme for the SADC member States |
| 18-21 March | Ouagadougou | Pan-African Conference on the implementation of the CCD |
| 27-28 March | Nouakchott | NGO Forum |
| 8-11 April | Praia | NGO Forum |
| 14-16 April | Rabat | Meeting of experts from AMU member States |
| 29 April-2 May | Asmara | Second Technical Workshop for African focal points for the CCD |
| 5-7 May | Nouakchott | Meeting of the Government of Mauritania with its major partners for combating desertification |
| 20-22 May | Cotonou | NGO Forum |
| 28-29 May | Dakar | Forum for formulation of National Action Programme |
| 23-27 June | Gaborone | Meeting on information systems for sustainable development |
| 1-3 July | Ouagadougou | Seminar on the Global Environmental Facilities (GEF and FFEM) and the funding of actions to combat desertification |
| 8-11 July | Ouagadougou | Forum for formulation of National Action Programme |
| 21-23 July | Niamey | Forum on the Subregional Action Programme for West African countries(CILSS/ECOWAS) |
| 2-5 September | Niamey | Second Asia-Africa Forum on the implementation of the CCD |
| 2-10 September | Banjul | Summit meeting (Heads of State and Government) of CILSS member States |
| 16-19 September | Maseru | Third Technical workshop for African focal points for the CCD |
| September (To be determined) | | Forum on Subregional Action Programme of AMU member States |

## Asia

*1996*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 28-31 January | Islamabad | Asian Regional NGO Conference |
| 11-12 March | Teheran | National Awareness Seminar in Iran |
| 16 March | Amman | Mid Term Workshop of Middle-East Joint Study |
| 20-21 March | New Delhi | Preparatory Meeting for the Asia Regional Conference |
| 26-28 March | Islamabad | National Awareness Seminar in Pakistan |
| 7-10 May | Istanbul | International Consultation of Eurasian and Mediterranean countries |
| 28-29 May | Amman | National Awareness Seminar in Jordan |
| 12-17 June | Beijing | National Awareness Seminar in China |
| 18 June | Bangkok | Substantive Review Meeting for the Asian Regional Conference |
| 23-25 June | Abu Dhabi | Subregional consultation on the implementation of the CCD in Western Asia |
| 5-11 August | Beijing | First Asia-Africa Forum on the implementation of the CCD |
| 21-23 August | New Delhi | Regional Conference on the implementation of the CCD in Asia |
| 22-25 October | Yangoon | National Awareness Seminar in Myanmar |
| 29-31 October | Yerevan | National Awareness Seminar in Armenia |
| 2-4 November | Damascus | National Awareness Seminar in Syria |
| 4-5 November | Almaty | National Awareness Seminar in Kazakhstan |
| 6-8 November | Sana'a | National Awareness Seminar in Yemen |
| 9-12 December | Hyderabad | Afro-Asian NGO Conference on South/South and North/South Cooperation |

*1997*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 29 January | Amman | Tripartite Round Table for Rift Valley Joint Study |
| 30 January | Damascus | Preparatory Meeting for Subregional Conference on West Asian Countries |
| 17-20 March | Sede Boker | Meeting on the synergies between the Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification Conventions |
| 18-20 March | Beirut | National Awareness Seminar in Lebanon |
| 24-26 March | Tashkent | National Awareness Seminar in Uzbekistan |
| 9-11 April | Damascus | Preparatory Meeting and Subregional Conference for Western Asia |
| 21-23 April | Tbilisi | National Awareness Seminar in Georgia |
| 22-23 April | Islamabad | National Awareness Seminar in Pakistan |
| 28-30 April | Kiev | National Awareness Seminar in Ukraine |
| 2-4 May | Bishkek | Newly Independent States NGO Conference |
| 13-15 May | Beijing | Ministerial Conference for Asia |
| 10-13 June | Tashkent | Interregional Conference for Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Transcaucasus |
| 2-3 July | Ulan Bator | National Awareness Seminar in Mongolia |
| 2-5 September | Niamey | Second Asia-Africa Forum on the implementation of the CCD |

## Latin America and the Caribbean

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***1995*** | | |
| 22 November | Buenos Aires | National Awareness Seminar in Argentina |
| 29 Nov.-1 Dec. | La Paz | National Awareness Seminar in Bolivia |
| 29 Nov.-1 Dec. | Ica | Latin American and Caribbean Regional NGO Conference |
| 19-20 December | Santiago | National Awareness Seminar in Chile |
| ***1996*** | | |
| 18-19 January | Lima | National Awareness Seminar in Peru |
| 24-26 January | Buenos Aires | First Regional Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Region |
| 12 March | La Paz | National Awareness Seminar in Bolivia |
| 18-20 April | Santo Domingo | Subregional Meeting of Caribbean countries |
| 23-24 April | Havana | National Awareness Seminar in Cuba |
| 17-19 June | Mexico City | Second Regional meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Region |
| 16-18 September | Port-au-Prince | National Awareness Seminar in Haiti |
| 23-24 September | Santo Domingo | National Awareness Seminar in the Dominican Republic |
| 1-2 November | Rio de Janeiro | National Awareness Seminar in Brazil |
| 10-12 November | San Francisco | NGO North-South Americas Forum |
| ***1997*** | | |
| 25-26 February | Quito | National Awareness Seminar in Ecuador |
| 10-12 March | Havana | Third Regional meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Region |
| 7-8 March | Havana | 2nd Latin American and Caribbean Regional NGO Conference |
| 11-13 July | Mexico City | National Awareness Seminar in Mexico |

## Northern Mediterranean

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***1994*** | | |
| 28-30 November | Brussels | NGO meeting on implementing the CCD |
| ***1996*** | | |
| 18-19 July | Madrid | Review Meeting on Progress in the Northern Mediterranean Region |
| 21 October | Brussels | European NGO meeting |
| 29 Oct.-1 Nov. | Crete | International Conference on Mediterranean Desertification: Research Results and Policy Implications |
| 5-6 December | Brussels | NGO Round-Table discussions on the CCD |
| 13-15 December | Barcelona | IV Euro-Med Forum (NGO) |
| 19-21 December | Montpellier | Euro-Mediterranean NGO Forum |
| ***1997*** | | |
| 10-12 April | Lisbon | Meeting of Northern Mediterranean Annex Countries |
| 22-23 May | Murcia | Regional Conference for the Northern Mediterranean |